



Women's Empowerment

in Finn Church Aid's Project Documents

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<p>ABSTRACT</p> <p>The purpose of this final project was to analyze Finn Church Aid's project documents. The objective was to study if there are signs of women's empowerment in the project documents used in development cooperation projects. And if so, how the signs of women's empowerment have been described. Finn Church Aid is one of the biggest development cooperation organizations in Finland. The aim of the development cooperation work is empowerment of communities.</p> <p>This final project was a qualitative study. The research method used was theory-guided content analysis. The data consisted of project documents related to development cooperation projects. The analysis was based on themes raised from an empowerment literature review.</p> <p>The results showed that in the project documents there are signs of women's empowerment and the signs have been described from different perspectives. Based on the results, the opportunity to gain power, the improvement of the quality of life and the signs of empowered women were described.</p> <p>The scope and obscurity of the concept of empowerment complicate its documentation. The project documents analyzed in this study, described women's empowerment, but without systematic analysis, the signs and description of it would have been limited. Both, project documentation and understanding of the concept of empowerment in the development cooperation projects, require improvement. The documentation should enable descriptive reporting, in which case the descriptions of empowerment can be indicated to those to whom the reporting is addressed</p>		
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<p>Tämän opinnäytetyön tarkoituksena oli analysoida Kirkon Ulkomaanavun projektidokumenteja. Tavoitteena oli selvittää, löytyykö kehitysyhteistyöprojekteissa käytettävistä projektidokumentista merkkejä naisten voimaantumisesta, sekä miten nämä voimaantumisen merkit on kuvattu. Kirkon Ulkomaanapu on yksi Suomen suurimmista kehitysyhteistyöjärjestöistä ja sen tukeman kehitysyhteistyön tavoitteena on yhteisöjen voimaantuminen.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyö toteutettiin käyttämällä laadullista tutkimusmenetelmää. Aineisto analysoitiin käyttäen teoriaohjaavaa sisällönanalyysiä. Aineisto koostui kehitysyhteistyöprojekteihin liittyvistä projektidokumenteista ja sen analyysi pohjautui voimaantumiseen liittyvistä tutkimuksista esille tulleisiin teemoihin.</p> <p>Opinnäytetyön tulokset osoittivat, että projektidokumenteissa on merkkejä naisten voimaantumisesta ja sitä on kuvattu monesta eri näkökulmasta. Tulosten perusteella projektidokumenteissa mainittiin naisten mahdollisuus voimaantumiseen sekä elämänlaadun paranemiseen ja voimaantumiseen liittyviä tekijöitä.</p> <p>Voimaantumiskäsitteen laajuus ja epämääräisyys vaikeuttavat sen dokumentointia. Tässä opinnäytetyössä käytetyt projektidokumentit kuvasivat naisten voimaantumista, mutta ilman systemaattista analysointia voimaantumisen merkit sekä kuvaukset olisivat jääneet suppeiksi. Niin projektidokumentointi kuin voimaantumisen käsitteiden ymmärtäminen projekteissa vaativat kehittämistä. Dokumentoinnissa tulee olla mahdollisuus kuvailevampaan raportointiin, jolloin todelliset voimaantumisen kuvaukset voidaan osoittaa myös niille tahoille, joille raportointi on osoitettu.</p>			
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1 INTRODUCTION

Development cooperation work and project funding in developing countries have been criticized. According to the criticism, the results of the development cooperation work projects over the years cannot be seen clearly and the development cooperation work is not efficient. (Moyo 2009: 29.) However, for example, the United Nations (2009: 3) defends the importance of the development cooperation work and can show results of achieving goals, yet slowly.

Finn Church Aid is one of the biggest development cooperation organizations in Finland. The goal of the development cooperation is to empower communities (FCA 2009a.) Finn Church Aid does the majority of its development cooperation work through projects. The context, aims, objectives, actions and results of these projects are documented, and the importance of reporting and the information found in the documentation concerning the projects is therefore significant.

Benini (2008: 18, 30) describes empowerment as a modern concept which has several aspects. Empowerment has been criticized by its obscurity, but it has become the core concept of international development. Empowerment is the key concept in the Lutheran World Federation's strategic plan and programme reality. Benini (2008: 5) states that empowerment has become as important a concept as economic growth. Empowerment is a controversial but complex concept (Datta & Kornberg 2002: 1).

There are several reasons to highlight women's empowerment. Seager (2009: 18-19) points out that there are countries where women face restrictions because of their gender. Restrictions are set, for example, by the state, laws, cultural factors, religious factors, and families, and they might concern for example mobility, dress codes and women's movements. The World Bank (2009: 38) notes that women's economic and social status has improved, but inequalities still affect whole societies, limiting growth and increasing poverty. These factors represent significant reasons to study women's empowerment and the meaning of it.

Finn Church Aid has shown the need to study the project documentation concerning women's empowerment. This study aims to analyze project documentation in order to give Finn Church Aid background information to dialogue with their cooperation

partners. The outcome of the final project helps Finn Church Aid to improve project planning, monitoring and documentation as regards women's empowerment and to dialogue with their partners on the concepts, programming and monitoring related to gender equity and women's empowerment. At present, it can be argued that the project documents do not provide enough information concerning women's empowerment.

This final project answers the question: Are there signs of women's empowerment in the project documents, and how have these signs been described in them? Firstly, the study requires comprehensive view of empowerment; what are the signs of empowerment according to the earlier studies. Secondly, analysis which guides the study process is required. The expected results would show if there are signs of women's empowerment in the project documents, and if there are, how are those signs described.

Women's rights work and, in particular, the planning and organisation of development cooperation are interesting subjects. Especially in this study, women's empowerment widens the perspective to women's right work and its effects. The study gives wider perspective to development cooperation in general and to the women's rights work, particularly with regard to empowerment. The final project encourages me to deepen my knowledge concerning empowerment, which is also a crucial part of the Degree Programme of Social Services studies and the competence of Bachelors of Social Services (Metropolia 2009). According to Arola and Kursula (2010: 15) Bachelors of Social Services should be able to anticipate the impact of international development and opportunities. Social concerns are global and human right issues affect all countries. Arvola and Kursula (2010: 15) state that Bachelors of Social Services should have global perspective in their work in order to open the variety of perspectives of social reality.

2 FINN CHURCH AID

The final project is realized for Finn Church Aid and in collaboration with them. The abbreviation for Finn Church Aid which will be used henceforth in this study is FCA. FCA is one of the biggest development cooperation organizations in Finland; FCA has cooperation in more than 30 countries all over the world (FCA 2009a). FCA's aim with

regard to the final project is to improve and develop gender-related programming, project formulation and documentation, and the way information in the documents is used in order to develop their projects. With the results of the final project, FCA can have background information to dialogue with their cooperation partners.

FCA works with people who need help the most (FCA 2009a). The key concept of the development cooperation work is empowerment (LWF – DWS 2007: 4). The idea behind development cooperation work is to have long-lasting cooperation with communities and people in order to achieve sustainable change. The objective of FCA's work is the empowerment of communities in order to reduce poverty and obtain human rights and peace. (FCA 2009b.)

Finland's official development policy and the United Nations Millennium Goals are the framework for FCA's work. The cooperation projects are supported by the state's funding and fundraising. (FCA 2009a, FCA 2009b.) FCA works with people who are in the weakest position in the society regardless of their religious beliefs, ethnicity, political convictions or gender. FCA's work is based on three themes: sustainable livelihoods, stable societies, rights and participation. Promotion of gender equality is a cross-cutting theme in all the work FCA does. (FCA 2009c.) The idea of gender equality and empowerment should be visible in the project documentation, but as presented earlier, FCA has felt the need for improvement on the documentation concerning empowerment.

FCA is a Lutheran World Service Department for World Service (LWF – DWS) partner. The Department for World Service is the practical implementer of the work of LWF – DWS and is funded by support organizations such as FCA. The projects FCA is funding are reported directly to FCA as well as other funding organizations. (FCA 2006a.) There are three approaches in the LWF - DWS Global Strategy for 2007-2012: the right-based approach, the integrated approach and the empowerment approach. Approaches are to emphasize the combination and to complement and support each other. (Benini 2008: 4; LWF - DWS 2007: 9.) According to Benini (2008: 18) LWF – DWS is aware that the understanding concerning empowerment approach differs between field programmes and head office of LWF - DWS, but they see designing and delivering the empowerment programmes as an achievement itself.

According to the LWF - DWS Global Strategy (2007: 9) empowerment approach includes people's capacity and competence building, so that they could achieve results for themselves on the individual, group and community levels. People should be empowered to take control of their lives by equipping them to develop their attitudes, skills and knowledge which broadens their options and improves their confidence. People should participate actively in all parts of the development, from planning and assessment phases to implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The empowerment approach includes motivating people in many ways, such as ideas and leadership, time and labour, or materials and money. The people involved are first consulted; the impact on them and their ability to participate are considered. The initiatives to develop should come from the people themselves. (LWF - DWS 2007: 9.)

The LWF – DWS Global Strategy (2007: 10) points out six thematic areas on which the projects are focused. The work is set in context of the global struggle to achieve a reduction in poverty and to increase respect for human rights. All the six themes can be linked with human rights, but also with the Millennium Development Goals. One of the themes focuses on women's rights and gender equity. It states that women have a central role, not only in family and community, but also in the process of development, and it demands implementation of human rights for girls and women. The causes of gender inequality for women include restricted participation in society, devaluation of experience and work, lack of power sharing, and violence against women. It has been recognized that for the improvement of women's status, the participation of both, men and women, is needed. Gender issues should concern all people, not only women. (LWF – DWS 2007: 10.)

Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 12) point out that development is the outcome of a process of change caused by different factors. In international cooperation, this process must be possible to monitor, measure with indicators, and if needed, be re-directed. (Charlier & Caubergs 2007: 12.) According to Benini (2008: 63) all the development cooperation projects produce a variety of written documents. Documents include mainly practical aspects of empowerment, not definitions or concepts of empowerment. (Benini 2008:63.)

The monitoring information from the project documentation is used for assessing progress, for making informed management decisions regarding project objectives,

working methods, partnerships, staffing, and capacity building, and for providing the necessary information to funders and other stakeholders. Project documentation is a technical function through which relevant monitoring information is made available to those who require it. The evaluation will look at whether the project objectives have been reached but also at the processes triggered by and within the project and their influence on the project stakeholders. (LWF – DWS 2007: 14.)

2.1 Gender mainstreaming

“Gender mainstreaming is the (re)organisation, improvement, development and evaluation of policy processes, so that a gender equality perspective is incorporated in all policies at all levels and at all stages, by the actors normally involved in policy-making.”
Council of Europe 2003

Gender refers to social constructions and differences between women and men (United Nations 2008: 3). The principle of gender mainstreaming is equality between women and men. It is a prevalent trend in society to support women and men to benefit equally and to stop inequalities that might discriminate against either gender. The idea of mainstreaming is to reduce poverty, strengthen economical growth and citizenship. The mainstreaming approach achieved acceptance in 1995. (European Commission 2004: 7, 9, 12.) Sen (2001) lists seven types of gender inequality: mortality, natality, basic facility, special opportunity, professional, ownership, and household inequality. Sen (2001) also points out the importance of women’s empowerment in the gender mainstreaming context.

Vijayamohan, Asalatha, and Ponnuswamy (2009: 6) argue that gender issues are fundamental for achieving development. Disparities in development results stem from gender differences. Gender equality itself is a value and a basis of human rights. The importance of gender development is seen in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, now a generally accepted framework for measuring development. From the total of eight goals, four are directly related to gender: achieving universal primary education, promoting gender equality and empowerment of women, reducing infant and child mortality; and improving maternal health. (Vijayamohan, Asalatha, & Ponnuswamy, 2009: 6-7.)

Gender mainstreaming has specific perspective in this final project. Even though the idea is to analyse women's empowerment in the project documents, women's empowerment cannot exclude men from the empowerment process. Finding signs of women's empowerment is not an issue concerning only women, but also the relationship between all community members and how the community and households together develop and improve women's position within the society.

2.2 Development Cooperation

Development cooperation as such is an extremely broad concept, and it can be achieved in numerous ways. To explain shortly the aspects of development cooperation, the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals are listed here. These goals also give guidelines to Finnish Development Policy. The goals are: eradicate extreme poverty and hunger, achieve universal primary education, promote gender equality and empower women, reduce child mortality, improve maternal health, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensure environmental sustainability, and develop a global partnership for development. (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Finland 2004: 6.) FCA works to contribute to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. Reducing poverty by half, gender equality and environmental sustainability are central issues. FCA's goals have a clear connection to the Finnish state's official development priorities, with emphasis on poverty reduction, environmental threats and equality, democracy, and the promotion of human rights. (FCA 2006b.)

Women's development as a concept has become an essential part of development discourse and policy initiatives. This development has been brought forth gradually and it has changed the perception of women, from their previous position as passive objects and victims to independent operators. A notable impetus for the surfacing of the matter came with the adaption of development issues within the UN system. In the orientation of the policy approaches towards women, the change has been gradual; from welfare to equity, then to anti-poverty and efficiency and finally to empowerment. (Vijayamohanan, Asalatha, & Ponnuswamy 2009: 2.)

In development cooperation, women's role came visible in the 1970s with WID, Women in Development. The approach called attention to women in development policy and in practice, but also to integrating women into the whole development

process. After that, as contrast to WID, came the GAD, Gender and Development; the approach focuses on the socially constructed differences between men and women. The idea of GAD is to challenge existing gender roles and relations. (Reeves & Baden 2000: 33.) The Beijing Declaration 1995 (section 13) (United Nations 1995), presents women's empowerment as a key strategy for development:

“Women's empowerment and their full participation on the basis of equality in all spheres of society, including participation in the decision-making process and access to power, are fundamental for the achievement of equality, development and peace.” (United Nations 1995.)

In this study, it has been taken into consideration that empowerment can differ depending on the context. Development cooperation gives a specific perspective to this final project as the project documents concern information from the development cooperation projects. This final project concentrates only on women's empowerment in the development cooperation context.

3 EMPOWERMENT

The meaning, usage and theories concerning empowerment have changed during the approximately forty years of the term's existence. The process of empowerment thinking has been powerful, quick and worldwide. As empowerment is described in several ways, the differences between *empowered* and *empowering* is not transparent. (Benini 2008: 21.) Hokkanen (2009: 319) points out that empowerment can be seen as a process, but also as an aim. Also according to Räsänen (2006: 80), empowerment can be viewed as a process or as a result on the individual, organizational or societal level. Empowerment is an essential and desirable issue, and international and national projects have brought a new way to define empowerment (Räsänen 2006: 75.)

Benini (2008: 30) states that in the empowerment discourse, the gender issues and women's movement have been the major leaders. Empowerment has a key role in gender equality, human reverence and in the power concerning freedom which is based on community, ability to manage common issues, and to achieve the common goals based on the equal partnership. Working together and common issues in the

management support the process of empowerment at all levels of the community. (Räsänen 2006: 80.)

Empowerment has various perspectives according to the different researchers, Adams (2003: 28) points out that there is not just one definition for the concept and the theory of empowerment. There are a variety of models and theories defined by different authors, but explicit set of concept is not clarified. Benini (2008: 34) also argues that empowerment is a multidimensional concept, and Kuronen (2004: 279) adds that in social field alone, there are several ways to understand the term.

According to Adams (2008:17) empowerment can be defined as a capability of communities, groups and individuals to take control of their conditions. Communities, groups and individuals are able to apply power in order to accomplish their own aims and in the end, to maximize their quality of life. Adams, Dominelli and Payne (2009: 262) also include goal setting and sharing with other groups or community members. Räsänen (2006: 78) adds that empowerment gives people a sense of personal control in relation to the reality and their destiny. The individual's experience of power or opportunities to impact their circumstances, to achieve goals and get more power in their lives are the key elements of empowerment (Räsänen 2006: 78). Siitonen (1999: 61) presents empowerment as a feeling of internal power. Empowerment is a liberating feeling of having resources and a responsible sense of creativity. Empowered people are reflecting positive attitudes and feelings. (Siitonen 1999: 61.)

Kabeer (2001: 18-19) defines empowerment as the “ability to make choices”. It refers to change; only the previously disempowered can be empowered. That alludes to the expansion in people’s ability to make strategic life choices in a context where previously they were denied this ability. (Kabeer 2001: 18-19.) Among individuals or community, empowerment means, firstly, the ability to act independently, but it also means the process of being able to act and make one’s own decisions about life and society (Charlier & Caubergs 2007: 9-10).

According to Siitonen (1999: 61), empowered people have the desire to try their best and also to take responsibility of the welfare of community members, with courage and confidence, by using the freedom of action. Räsänen (2006: 78) includes that awakened and empowered people feel able to empower and influence their lives and their work.

Brave, fearless, future and goal oriented people believe in themselves, and they have better social skills. People need to have the power over the external reality and themselves in order to be empowered. (Räsänen, 2006: 78.)

Bartunek and Spreitzer (2006: 255, 258) studied how the meaning of empowerment has developed in the past 35 years across six disciplines: religion, psychology, sociology, education, social work, and management. These disciplines have been used in the research of social science during the last decades. During that time, the meaning of empowerment has extended considerably. As a result of the study, Bartunek and Spreitzer (2006: 259) divided empowerment into three broad categories; sharing real power, fostering human welfare, and fostering productivity. Sharing real power refers to having and strengthening power of the underrepresented, political participation and having control over one's destiny. Fostering human welfare includes enabling human welfare, pride in culture, increasing self-worth, increasing knowledge, personal meaning, dignity and respect, providing resources, connectedness, and increasing options. Fostering productivity refers to participation in decision making, taking responsibility, enabling others, having a sense of ownership, and working in teams. (Bartunek & Spreitzer 2006: 259-261.)

Benini (2008: 66) argues that Bartunek's and Spreitzer's (2006: 259-261) scheme of empowerment is insufficient when it is considered with the rights of individuals and communities. Benini (2008: 18) studied the concept of empowerment in order to clarify the term based on the concepts of empowerment used in LWF – DWS field programs. He claims that empowerment cannot be observed directly, but the conclusions must be made with observations of acts contributing to it. (Benini 2008: 18.)

3.1 Women As Oppressed

Power and dominance are the sources of discrimination and powerlessness. Prevailing methods to structure the reality are presented by those in power as an objective reality. To be empowered, people must identify the problems and fight for their causes. Merely helping does not help, unless the culture of the society and the different roles of people are taken into account. (Räsänen, 2006: 79-80.) Empowerment is constant awareness and a conscious view of life. Powerlessness has two sources: the social environment and person's own self. It can refer to situations in which the continuous

denial of human needs and right for self-determination can be presented. Symptoms of powerlessness are anxiety and fearfulness. (Räsänen, 2006: 92.)

Empowerment is a phenomenon that structures the person's relationship to self, goals, feelings, and surroundings. *Empowered* is the opposite of powerless, helpless, incapable, incompetent, and inefficient. A powerless person is depressed, burnt out, has learned helplessness, is estranged, has lost control of life, and is in many ways incapable. (Räsänen 2006: 92.)

According to Lee (2001: 49), empowerment approach encourages oppressed people. Empowerment occurs on three interrelated levels: personal, interpersonal and political. All the levels include generic but also particular knowledge that defines the level. Empowerment on the personal level concerns coping abilities, how individuals can cope with discrimination based on, for example, their class or colour which might affect their self-concept and their sense of self-worth, even though family and community structures work as mediates. Lee (2001: 51) points out that racism and discrimination affects self-direction, self-esteem, and the development of one's competence. Lee (2001: 51) states that the oppressed need to be emancipated. People need to refuse oppression, gain strength in order to improve potentialities, and cooperate in working towards the elimination of oppression. In order to empower, the knowledge concerning the ability to cope with oppression and adaptive capacities is essential. (Lee 2001: 51.)

On the interpersonal level of empowerment, it is important to know how families, groups and communities develop strengths to cope with oppression. In interpersonal terms, power is defined as an ability to impact others in order to achieve goals and wanted resources. For the empowerment approach, it is natural and imperative that the empowerment of the group takes place through collective action, group connection and through the knowledge the group holds concerning interaction and how they develop and achieve tasks. On the political level, empowered people are able to take action as communities. People have knowledge concerning the oppression and the change and their function on the collective level. (Lee 2001: 52.)

3.2 The Power of Power

According to Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 9) in order to understand the concept of empowerment, it is required to consider the concept of power. Empowerment can thus be seen as the process of achieving the "power" individually and collectively. Empowerment as a process is a dynamic two-pronged construction of identity, both individually and collectively. The approach to power has been collected by various feminist bodies and development NGOs (non-governmental organization), which have agreed that the empowerment process should be specified into four levels of power: power over, power to, power with and power within. (Charlier & Caubergs 2007: 10.)

Power over includes a relationship of subordination and domination which is mutually exclusive. *Power over* expects that power exists only in restricted quantities. *Power over* is a way of taking advantage of others, or it allows "someone to be lead." It defuses passive or active resistance.

Power to involves the capability to make decisions, possess authority, and discover solutions to problems, and can be permitting and creative. The idea therefore refers to the intellectual capacities, knowledge and know-how, and financial means.

Power with is political or social power that emphasizes the notion of common understanding or meaning, and the possibility to meet, to negotiate and to defend common objectives. Collectively, people have the feeling of having power when they can gather and unite in seeking a common goal, or when they share a mutual vision.

Power within is a concept of power that refers to identity, assertiveness, self-awareness and self-esteem. It refers to how individuals can influence their lives and make changes through self-analysis and internal power. (Charlier & Caubergs 2007: 10.)

Power (as empowerment) cannot be measured, it is two-dimensional phenomenon. Power includes the prevailing values, beliefs, rituals and institutional processes that operate systematically and consistently, producing a benefit to any individual or group detriment of others. Empowerment is the opposite of being continuously careful and of a sense of alienation. People are not empowered by themselves, but empowerment is built by conscious thinking and choices. (Räsänen, 2006: 81.)

3.3 The Process of Empowerment

In order to achieve empowerment, to be empowered, freedom and the experience of independence have an important role from the beginning of the empowerment process. Also the experiences and views concerning the context, environment and community have a crucial role in the beginning of the process, but particularly in maintaining and strengthening the empowerment process. Empowerment refers to the process where the opportunities of an individual and a group to influence the matters that are crucial concerning their life situations are strengthened. (Siitonen 1999: 61.)

Power cannot be given to another (Siitonen 1999: 117; Payne 2005: 296). Empowerment is a personal and a social process (Siitonen 1999: 117) and people must be helped to take it for themselves (Payne 2005: 296). The need for empowerment and for the feeling of internal power will arise at the latest when it is attempted to prevent or impede empowerment. Empowerment is a process that starts inside people and has a connection to people's own will, their personal goal setting, as well as confidence in their ability to view themselves and their own effectiveness. (Siitonen 1999: 117.) Although empowerment is a personal process, it is influenced by other people, circumstances and social structures. The challenge of empowerment process is that empowerment can be supported with many possible simultaneous solutions, even though another person cannot give power to anyone and not unilaterally decide about someone's empowerment. (Siitonen 1999: 118.)

Haleh (1998: 2) points out that the process of empowerment requires confidence from the community members. The resources have to be accessible, and community members have to understand that they can make choices. LWF - DWS (2007: 9) presents that when people have skills, knowledge and attitude, they should be empowered to take control of their lives. Empowerment requires that the members of the community participate in all aspects of the process, in planning, monitoring and evaluation (LWF - DWS 2007: 9).

Power and responsibility are strongly related to the process of empowerment as well as to the empowerment as result. Empowerment means improvement of collective and individual authorities and resources by giving power and social support; in other words,

the prevention of slavishness and allegiance. Power and responsibility have crucial importance in the process of empowerment. (Räsänen 2006: 77-78.)

3.4 Women's Empowerment

This chapter presents special aspects concerning women's empowerment. These aspects do not exclude the perspectives presented in previous chapters, but deepen the idea of empowerment concerning women. Women's empowerment means understanding of gender relations and the ways these relations might change. Women's empowerment signifies understanding and respect of self-worth and awareness of skills and ability to change. Empowered women have the possibility and ability to make choices, and they are equal in the society. The change in women's position can occur, for example, with education and with possibility to participate in domestic and on political level. (Kiriti, Tisdell & Roy 2006: 202-203.)

According to Ravinder's and Narayana's (2006:2), development depends on women's empowerment. Their study highlights employment, women's earnings from work. The earnings are used on family welfare and especially on children. Chaudhuri (2001: 1) has studied trends of women's empowerment in Asia. In the study, the measures for women's empowerment are economic participation, educational attainment, wage work, fertility, female to male sex ratio of living children, and the ideal female to male sex ratio. The study presents that women's empowerment is a multidimensional and complex concept, which needs to be measured and defined together with related factors. (Chaudhuri 2001: 2, 5.)

The Commission on Women and Development's working group (Charlier & Caubergs 2007: 6) has drawn indicators for women's empowerment in development cooperation context. They define it in a following way: On the individual level the indicators are the gaining of greater independence and ways to expand opportunities, but also the ability for self-determination. On the collective level, the indicators are movements towards an impartial and equitable society, particularly in relations between men and women and the ability of a group to influence social change. Women's empowerment is not the result of a linear evolution, nor is it the same for all societies, but it is a process that can only be built with women's and mixed movements. (Charlier & Caubergs 2007: 6.)

Charlier & Caubergs (2007: 13) present four aspects of women's empowerment; assets, knowledge and know-how, will and capacity. Assets, defined also as power, refer to an economic power in terms of material assets, such as land, income, technology or tools. That said, economic power is not merely the possession of wealth and resources, but it also includes the access to certain services such as loans, information and training, more time, better health, health centres and markets. (Charlier & Caubergs 2007: 13.)

Knowledge and knowhow, which refers to *power to*, signifies gaining more intellectual and practical skills or knowledge. This allows a person or a community to realize the opportunities that emerge. *Power to*, refers to management (leadership), methods and techniques, to education (literacy), as well as to the development of thinking and critical analysis skills. Know-how stresses the importance of the application of knowledge or ability to utilize the gained knowledge into utilization and resources. (Charlier & Caubergs 2007: 13.)

Will refers to internal power, spiritual power or psychological strength and also to individual's fears and values, self-perception, and self-confidence. It is a capability and willingness to make decisions for the future, consciousness of one's plans for life and the challenges facing one's community. Capacity, internal energy, defined also as power with, refers to having the opportunity to make decisions, to take responsibility, to be free to act as desired, and to the use of resources like assets, knowledge, will. The aspects of decision-making are the ability to make decisions, ability to participate in the decision-making, ability to influence the decision making and control those who make the decisions on behalf of others, ability to make decisions for others, and show authority. (Charlier & Caubergs 2007: 13.)

3.5 Women's Empowerment in the Study

Based on the presented studies and approaches of empowerment, especially women's empowerment, FIGURE 1 was assembled. The figure has its bases on Bartunek and Spreitzer's (2006: 259-261) scheme of empowerment, but as Benini (2008: 66) argues, this is insufficient when it is considered with individuals' and communities' rights, even though those did not emerge from the aspects of empowerment presented in this final project either. In this study the figure is reformed in many ways, some of the titles are changed in order to create a view that presents, in a comprehensive manner, the ideas

found from the studies concerning women's empowerment reviewed in this final project. Some of the elements presented in Bartunek and Spreitzer's (2006: 259-261) scheme are reduced, as those elements were not present in other approaches of empowerment presented in this final project.

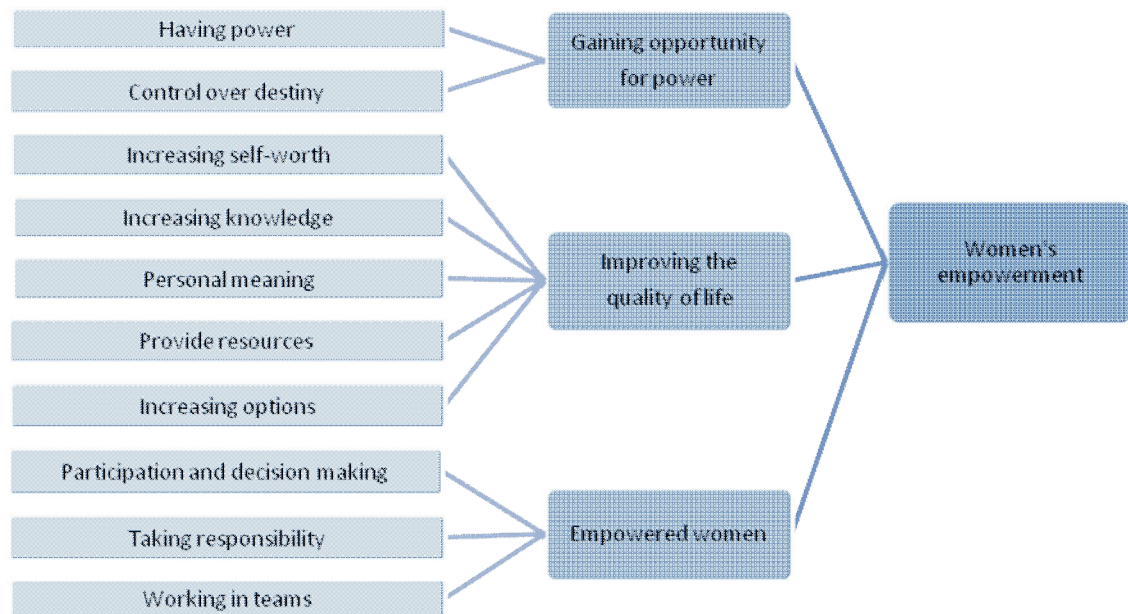


FIGURE 1. Compilation of women's empowerment.

The elements that are left in the compilation were also presented by other authors and have shown their importance in order to create a comprehensive view of women's empowerment, see FIGURE 1. For example *Increasing self-worth* was mentioned by Kabeer (2001: 19), Kiriti, Tisdell & Roy (2006: 202-203) and Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 20). This compilation, FIGURE 1, constitutes the indicators for analysing signs of women's empowerment together with the project documents.

4 REALIZATION OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to analyze FCA's project documents in order to give FCA background information to have dialogue with their cooperation partners and to develop their documentation. The final project's result should show, based on the project documents, if the expected aims are reached; do the project documents give enough information concerning the context, aims, implementation and results of women's empowerment work? With the result FCA can, if necessary, have dialogue with their

partners concerning how to strengthen the empowerment projects, how to learn from their experiences, and how to improve reporting.

4.1 The Focus of the Study

The study problem was: Are there signs of women's empowerment in the project documents, and how are the signs of women's empowerment described? The focus for collecting the data was on the project documents. The signs of women's empowerment, found from the project documents, were compared with results of the literature review; how were the signs of women's empowerment described in different empowerment studies and approaches. The outcome of the study might differ from the reality (are there signs of women's empowerment) depending on the reporting instructions and the quality of documentation.

In this final project, only the essential topics were reviewed. The idea was to analyze women's empowerment in the project documents, not to evaluate the documents, to find measurements for good quality documentation nor to suggest how the project documents should be written. The study does not include a so-called empowerment analysis – has empowerment really occurred – but the idea was to find signs of women's empowerment. It would have been impossible to answer the question whether empowerment has really occurred; in this study, only the signs of empowerment were studied.

4.2 Qualitative Data Collection Method

The study was qualitative. Hirsjärvi, Remes and Sajavaara (2009: 161) state that the qualitative method is meant to describe real life, and real life is varied. A qualitative study needed to be made comprehensively in order to understand the entirety and relations that might change it. The aim is to find or expose facts, but also to disclose unexpected issues. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 161, 164.)

The most common qualitative data collection methods are interviews, questionnaires, observation and knowledge in documents (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 71). The data is collected from natural and real life situations (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 164). Chosen data can be used alternatively, together or as combined, according to the studied problem and

study resources (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 71). In this study, FCA's project documents were used, as the idea was to analyse women's empowerment due to the project documents. The fact that writers of the project documents have extremely high impact on the quality of the documentation has been taken into consideration in the study. It was not known in advance how high or low quality contents the project documents include.

The data analysed included: Country Strategies, Project Plans and Documents, Country Operational Programme Plan (COPP) documents, Annual Monitoring Reports, Quarterly Monitoring Reports and Monitoring and Evaluation Reports from the years 2006–2008. The countries and projects selected for cooperation with FCA were:

- Rwanda: Eastern Province Integrated DVP and Empowerment Project
- Sierra Leone: Integrated Community Empowerment Program
- Mozambique: Gaza Integrated Rural Development Project, and Support to Xikheleni Community, HIV/aids Project
- Eritrea: Anseba Community Development Project and Gender and Reproductive Health Right Awareness Project.

The data included in total 79 project documents, see APPENDIX 1, LIST OF DOCUMENTS. From the Quarterly Monitoring Reports, objectives and results as well as activities and indicators of the projects were analyzed, as those were mentioned in each Quarterly Monitoring Report and gave equal, comprehensive and compact understanding of what was realized in each project. Other project documents, the Country Strategies, Project Documents, COPP-documents, Annual Reports and Monitoring and Evaluation Reports were looked through more comprehensively, as those included more descriptive information concerning the projects. Quarterly and Annual Monitoring Reports combine both narrative and financial information. Annual monitoring reports cover the activities carried out, results, costs, and a critical assessment of the achievement of objectives.

4.3 Content analysis

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 162), content analysis is one part of qualitative research, and it was chosen as analysis method for this final project. Bell (2009: 129)

describes content analysis as a study method for analysing documents systematically and objectively. The data have to be well-grounded and broad enough to enable competent conclusions. In this study it was taken into consideration that the data from the project documents might not be comprehensive which can affect the results of the analysis. Also Robson (2002: 358) points out as a disadvantage the possibility of partial or limited documents and their influence to the analysis.

Critical point of view while analyzing the data was very important as in advance there was no information concerning the quality of the project documents. The documents analyzed with content analysis can be, for example, books, articles, interviews or reports and almost anything that can be put into written form. Content analysis intends to describe the phenomenon in a general and compact form. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 103), content analysis is criticized because of its limitations concerning conclusions; the analysis can be described in detail, but the outcome of the analysis might be described as results more than conclusions.

Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 92) emphasize the importance of limiting: a narrow phenomenon should be chosen for the study, and that should be studied in detail. In this study, only the elements of empowerment with specific view of women's empowerment were studied; how were the elements of women's empowerment described in the project documents.

The data describes the studied phenomenon, and the purpose of the analysis is to create verbal and clear description of the phenomenon. The idea of content analysis is to organize data into compact and clear form without losing the contained information. Qualitative analysis of the data should increase the information value, as the idea is to create reasonable, coherent and clear information from the data. The analysis should lead to explicit results from which it is easy to make clear and reliable conclusions. Qualitative processing of the data is based on logical reasoning and interpretation, in which the data is first spread into components, then conceptualized and eventually collected again in a new way as a logical entity. With qualitative data, the analysis is done in every stage of the process. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 108.)

4.4 Theory-guided Content Analysis

Content analysis can be inductive or deductive. In evidence-based content analysis, the focus is on the data. The data should show grounds for theoretical entity. The analysis units are selected from the data by their meaning and by the study question. The main idea is that the analysis units are not appointed in advance. Earlier studies concerning the topic should not lead the analysis; the result should be shown by the data. Theory-based content analysis is based on some specific theory or model. The studied phenomenon is defined in advance, and that guides the analysis. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 97-98.)

Theory-guided content analysis is processed based on the data like the evidence-based content analysis. In the evidence-based content analysis, as in the theory-guided content analysis, the studied phenomenon is defined by the data. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 98.) The difference between evidence-based content analysis and theory-guided content analysis is that in theory-guided content analysis the empirical data is attached to the theory. In theory-guided content analysis, theoretical concepts have been brought as “already known” phenomena, whereas in evidence-based content analysis the theoretical concepts are brought from the data. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 117.)

In this final project, theory-guided content analysis was chosen, as it permits studying the grounds for women’s empowerment in advance in order to have a holistic understanding of it. Theory-guided content analysis also gives permission to look for new concepts concerning women’s empowerment from the data. It does not exclude neither already known approaches concerning women’s empowerment nor the findings that the data might show, as it was not known in advance what sort of information the project documents contain.

4.5 The Analysis

The technical part of the analysis was carried out based on the phases introduced by Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 92). According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 101, 109), the technical part of the data analysis starts by reducing the original expressions from the data. The project documents were reviewed comprehensively and all the unessential information was eliminated. The data was asked consistent questions.

Based on the literature review, following questions were asked from the data during the analysis: How are the knowledge and claims concerning human/women's rights described? How is the relationship between women and men, gender mainstreaming, described? How have (women's) abilities/capabilities improved? What kind of knowledge do they have more? How is the knowledge achieved? How is women's participation and decision-making in the community described? How are the improved living conditions described? What has been done in order to improve them?

Starting the analysis, it was already known what kind of facts were interesting and relevant in the data, and these sentences and words were separated and changed into simple expressions. Then the simple expressions were classified into groups of expressions. All the expressions which involved the same intention were put into one category which was named. In general, these are called sub-categories (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 109). For example, all the expressions that included information concerning women's participation in the community or in households were categorized into same the group and named *Participation on all levels within the community*. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 101), forming the categories is a critical stage in the analysis as in this stage it is decided which are the grounds for categorizing the expressions. In the analysis, the simple expressions were processed three times in order to ensure the right categorization.

The analysis continued by linking the same content sub-categories and based on those, forming main categories. In order to attach the information from the data with the women's empowerment approaches, reviewed earlier, the sub-categories were forced under main categories that were based on the categories presented in FIGURE 1. (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2009: 117.) For example the sub-categories *Ability to advocate for rights*, *Ability to determine needs and take control over destiny* and *Creation of communality and working towards common goal* were forced into the main category *Control over destiny* (also presented in FIGURE 1). Main categories were conceptualized to describe the content. In the end, all main categories were connected into one category that describes all of them. For example main categories *Having power* and *Control over destiny* were conceptualized into *Gaining opportunity for power*, as presented in the FIGURE 1. According to Tuomi and Sarajärvi (2009: 101, 117) sub-categories, main categories and connecting categories should help finding the answer to

the study question. The data presented also the aspect of human/women's right, and those aspects are presented in the chapter 5.4 Human Rights as Part of the Project Documents.

5 STUDY RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the analysis. In the results, the signs of women's empowerment are divided into three categories based on the themes presented in FIGURE 1. The first theme is Gaining Opportunity for Power, the second Improving the Quality of Life and the third Empowered Women.

The project documents in general included one sentence descriptions of the aims, results, activities and indicators concerning the project realization, and mainly those were used to analyse the project documents. Only some of the project documents, for example Country Strategies or Project Documents, had more descriptive content concerning the projects where to look for signs of women's empowerment. In some of the project documents, the description of empowerment was separated from the other content, even though empowerment was the method used throughout the project. Parts that included only theoretical descriptions of strategic approaches used in the projects, for example in Sierra Leone COPP-document the Empowerment Approach, were separated from the analysis. With the separation, it was ensured that signs of women's empowerment, introduced on the projects, were found. At the beginning of the analysis the content of the project documents seemed to be quite poor, but with more open study questions, the answers were possible to find.

In most of the project documents, the content did not include information directly concerning women's empowerment. Aims or results regarding to the projects that concerned only or also women as a part of the community were mentioned infrequently. Usually the aims of the projects were set for the whole community and then, within those, women were mentioned particularly.

FIGURES 2. Gaining opportunity for power, 3. Improving the quality of life and 4. Empowered women present the results and how the results are connected to the theoretical review. In the first row, there are disclosed summaries of the expressions

from the data, in the second row the sub-category based on the literature review and in the third row the main category. Each chapter also includes quotes from the data to give more detailed information and examples.

5.1 Gaining Opportunity for Power

Some matters that emerged from the project documents were the reduction of domestic violence, FGM (Female Genital Mutilation), inequalities and discrimination between women and men and the impact of HIV positivity on women, see FIGURE 2.

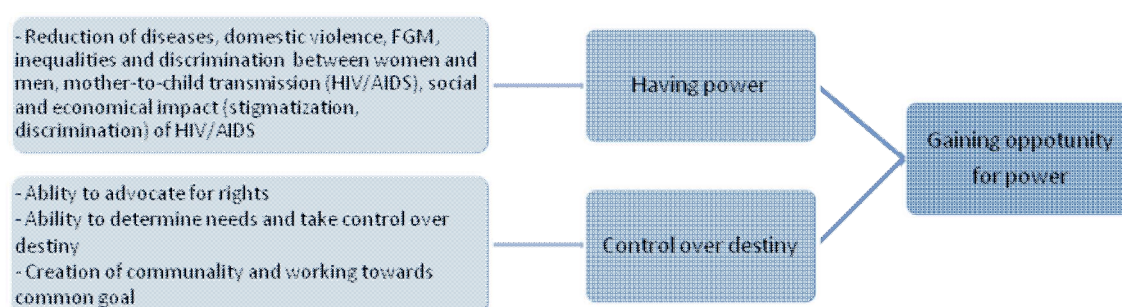


FIGURE 2. Gaining opportunity for power

Awareness of the risks of HIV/AIDS was seen as leading to the reduction of mother-to-child transmission as well as to reduction of the social and economical impact of HIV/AIDS. The idea of empowerment is to gain enough power to be able to make a change. The gender issues were mentioned several times, and reduction of discrimination and stigmatization of rights of a gender was described as the projects' result.

Reduction of Economical and social impact of HIV/AIDS among communities. Mozambique Xikheleni Quarterly Monitoring Report 2-2007.

Reduction of inequalities between men and women in access and control over resources and benefits of development. Rwanda Annual Monitoring Report 2008.

Later on after the dissemination of massive campaign and organized formal and non-formal education supported by video shows, the communities understanding towards FGM was highly increased to the extent that some mothers had stopped circumcising their newborn baby girls, and the number of people advocating against FGM and women's rights have increased. Eritrea GRHAP Project Document 2008.

The project documents showed that control over one's own and over a community's destiny are the goals the projects are aiming for. Ability to take control over destiny was seen as a result of the empowerment process. The idea behind control over destiny was seen as responsibility and control and as an access to participation in all community activities and services. According to the project documents, taking initiatives in order to be able to take control over destiny is needed in mobilization and in ability to determinate needs.

Vulnerable people having access to literacy education. Sierra Leone Project Document 2006-2008.

Empowerment of communities and the poorest and vulnerable people, including women, means enabling them to take more control of their lives by making their own decisions and determining the type, degree and direction of changes they need and want. Sierra Leone Project Document 2006-2008.

5.2 Improving the Quality of Life

Increased self-worth was mentioned especially in the context of the change in attitude and behaviour within the probability of the risk of HIV infections. A better self-worth was also described as sense of dignity, self-actualization, sense of self-confidence and change of women's perception of self. As a result, women can have capacity for self-assessment and for improving their quality of life. Ability to discuss difficult issues was also described. According to the project documents, better self-worth gives strength to discuss sensitive issues, see FIGURE 3.

Change of behaviour with probability of increasing the risk of HIV infections. Mozambique Gaza Quarterly Monitoring Report 4-2007.

Communities at the household level will be able to discuss issues such as domestic violence, the rights of children and women, sexually transmitted diseases (HIV/AIDS), and early pregnancies, and participate in interventions to prevent them. Mozambique COPP 2007-2009.

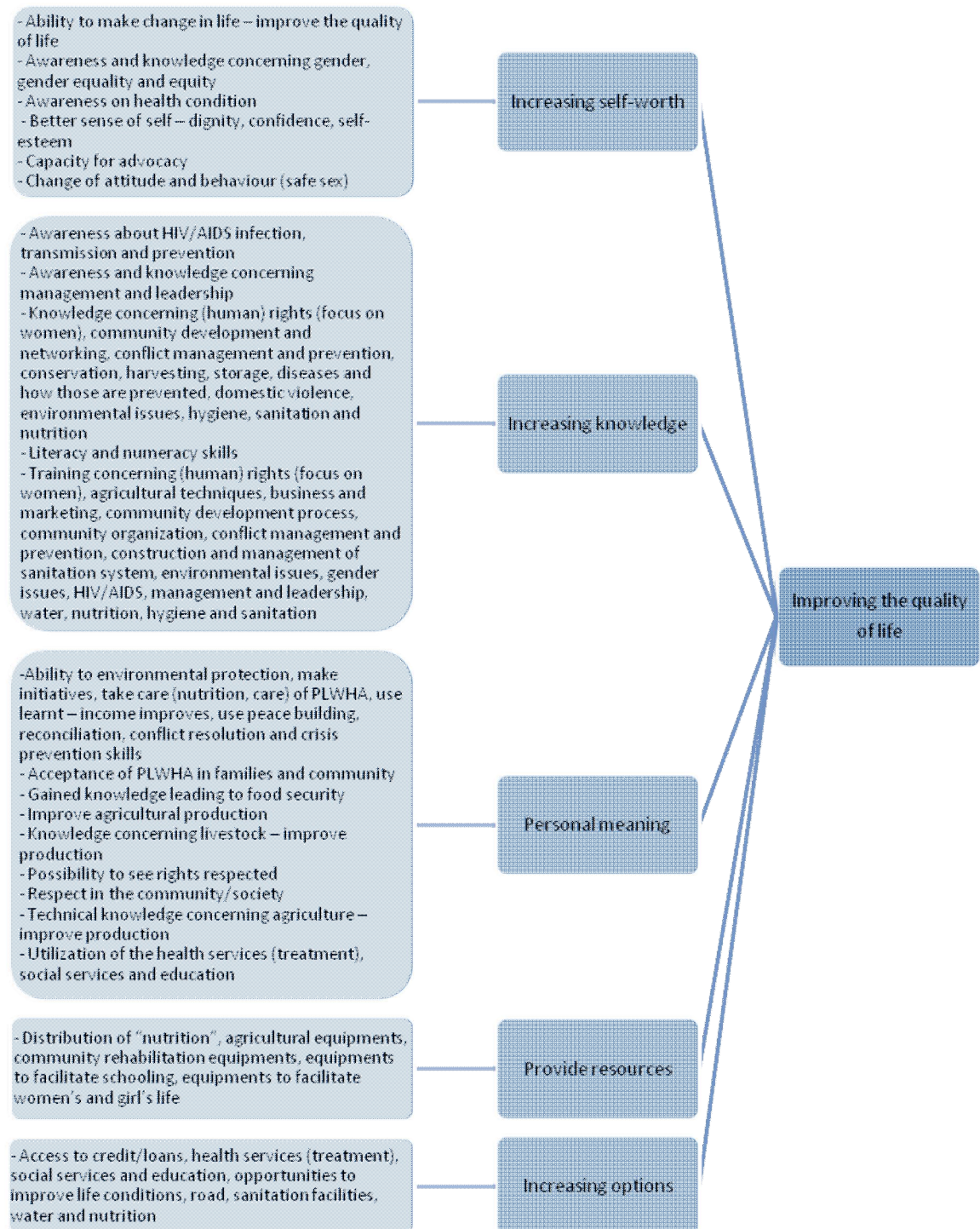


FIGURE 3. Improving the quality of life.

Increasing knowledge was the major topic described in the project document. It has two sides. As one activity of the projects, the documents mentioned training concerning, for example, the concept of gender, inter-personal communication skills and gender-based violence. And as a results of the projects, for example, the knowledge on drug abuse, domestic violence and farming skills were described. It was not explained how the training would be realized or how the knowledge could be measured, but the content of

the project documents explains that the community members have access to the training, training has been done and it should have consequences of increasing knowledge.

Support for introduction of appropriate farming technology through demonstrations and training on animal traction and sensitize communities on it benefit. Rwanda Annual Monitoring Report 2006.

...to know their basic rights and duties and advocate for policy change and rights based services. Sierra Leone Annual Programme Report 2008.

The meaning of the projects on a personal level was described in the aims of the projects, but those were mainly related to farming and to the increase of production and sustainability and thereby to food security and better income; see FIGURE 3. The ability to use the learnt efficiently in the division of conflict resolution, peace activity as in the use of micro-credits were mentioned. Also the issues of using the available services emerged from the project documents.

Support strengthening of indigenous systems for conflicts resolutions e.g. Gacaca through establishment and support to local counseling and peace activity leadership enhancing gender sensitive approach through greater involvement of women in conflict resolution and management. Rwanda Annual Monitoring Report 2006.

Also some concrete signs of achieving set indicators can already be seen, e.g. through farmers trainings, the foundation of associations and solidarity groups, the application of new production skills, increased food security and growing of self-confidence and initiative of farmers and consequently more self-help activities among the target groups. Rwanda Quarterly Monitoring Report 3-2007

The provision of resources emerged from the project documents. The equipments that had been distributed were products that are needed in everyday life, such as clean water or underwear for girls. Also the provision of contraceptives for women was mentioned. On a community level, the provision of resources profits the whole community; the construction of schools or community centres was mentioned in the project documents.

Support 140 girl children with uniforms and fees from vulnerable hh for two terms in 14 schools. Sierra Leone Annual Monitoring Report 2008.

Construction of improved stoves. Eritrea Anseba Annual Monitoring Report 2006

In the project documents, the access to basic services and roads was mentioned several times. That increases options. The access to social services and health facilities, especially those directed to people living with HIV/AIDS, was mentioned frequently as was the access to education. Also, it was recognized that sanitation facilities should be developed and community members should have access to them. Access to credits and loans was described to give opportunity to start a business and to gain better income.

Empowered CBOs made of vulnerable people (women and youth groups) have increased income through established and networked small and micro enterprises. Sierra Leone Quarterly Monitoring Report 2-2006.

Increased access to safe water and improved personal and environmental sanitation. Eritrea Anseba Quarterly Monitoring Report 1-2006.

Promote the access and opportunities for women and men to health and education basic services. Mozambique Xikheleni Quarterly Monitoring Report, 4-2007.

5.3 Empowered Women

According to the project documents, women and men were given equal opportunities to participate and make decision, and also inclusion and rights of women in the society. Women's participation in decision making was mentioned on a household level as well as on a community level. It was not mentioned what sort of activities or initiatives need to be taken in order to gain equality in participation and decision making.

Increased number of women participating with the same opportunity as men. Mozambique Xikheleni Annual Monitoring Report 2007.

Equitable representation of men and women in participatory democratic processes and in decision at the household and in the public sphere. Rwanda Quarterly Monitoring Report 2-2008.

There are positive signals as far as involvement of women in positions of leadership is concerned. Mozambique Annual Monitoring Report 2006.

The project documents mentioned the responsibility of the community members on all levels of development, see FIGURE 4. The communities and also separately mentioned women should have responsibilities in the development process. Sustainability and environmental protection were also adduced frequently.

They took over the responsibility of spearheading the community development process. Mozambique Gaza Annual Monitoring Report 2007.

The project will contribute to the reduction of health hazards and ensure attitudinal/behavioural change by affording safe drinking water, basic environmental sanitation and adoption of health/ hygiene practices within the rural communities. Sierra Leone COPP 2006-2008.

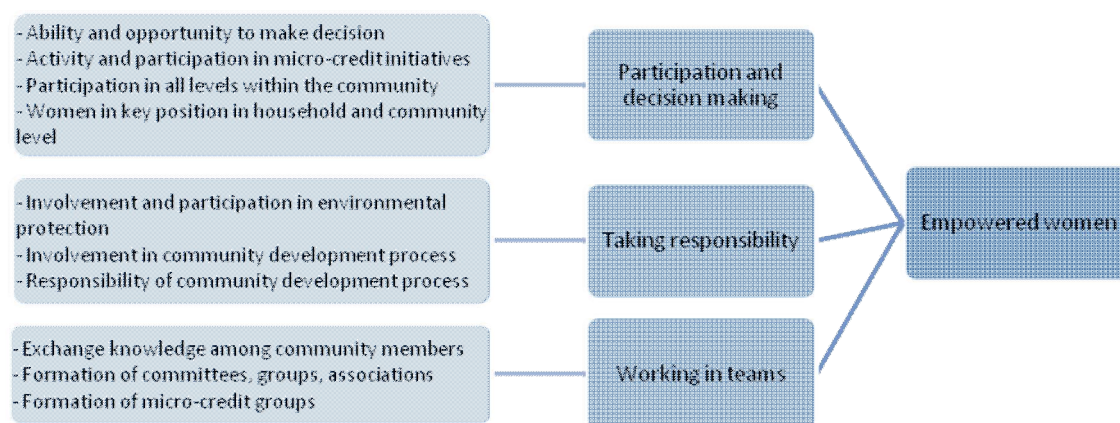


FIGURE 4. Empowered women

The ability to form and work in groups especially among women emerged in the project documents. The groups were aiming to exchange knowledge and give support to other team members. Also the formation of community committees and associations was described. These were described also to permit decision making for all the community members.

Training on cooperative development and group dynamics. Rwanda Quarterly Monitoring Report 3-2008.

Facilitate women and youth groups to exchange knowledge and skills among themselves the farm field schools, facilitate agricultural training about crop diversification, improved integrated farming systems and appropriate new farming technologies. Sierra Leone COPP 2006-2008.

Nº of groups/ associations and cooperatives formed and are operational. Rwanda Annual Monitoring Report 2006.

5.4 Human Rights

The aspect of human rights as part of empowerment did not rise up from the literature review of this final project, but the rights issues were mentioned several times in the project documents, and that needs to be taken into consideration. The aspect of human

rights was described as community members' possibility to have training and that way gain knowledge concerning human rights and specially women's and PLWHA's (People living with HIV/AIDS) rights. The protection and advocacy of human rights were seen as a result of the projects. The aspect of human rights was often written under other content, but in some cases, human rights and their aims and results were mentioned separately.

The project worked with local support structures in order to ensure the protection of human rights in particular women and children's rights. Mozambique Xikheleni Annual Monitoring Report 2008.

Women social groups will be established or strengthened to lobby and advocate for women's rights and to provide counselling for victims of sexual and domestic violence. Mozambique Gaza Project Document 2007-2009.

Empowered communities have increased knowledge about human rights and capability for advocacy. Sierra Leone Quarterly Monitoring Report 2-2006.

The themes *Gaining opportunity for power*, *Improving the quality of life* and *Empowered women* comprise the signs of women's empowerment studied in this final project. Each theme has the connection, but also leads to women's empowerment. As an additional theme, the aspect of human rights emerged from the project documents.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this final project was to analyse FCA's project documents; were there signs of women's empowerment, and how were these signs described? The aim was to give FCA background information in order to have a dialogue with their partners about how to strengthen the empowerment projects, how to learn from the experiences and how to improve reporting.

The signs of women's empowerment were searched from the documentation of six different projects, 79 project documents in total. Based on the approaches and studies presented in the literature review, a summary was collected which divided women's empowerment into three themes. The signs that emerged from the project documents, in

the final stage of the analysis, were put under these three themes: Gaining opportunity for power, Improving the quality of life and Empowered women.

According to the Global Strategy of The Lutheran World Federation Department for World Services 2007-2010 (2007: 9), the empowerment approach is a cross-cutting approach in all development cooperation projects. According to the Global Strategy, the empowerment approach builds individuals', groups' and communities' capacity and competence to achieve results for themselves. Empowered people are able to take control of their lives by equipping them with knowledge, skills and attitudes that broaden their options; they have more confidence. (LWF - DWS 2007:9.)

The description of empowerment in Global Strategy is rather broad and can include several issues. The Global Strategy did not include more detailed or practical information about the empowerment approach. Some of the Country Strategies and Country Operational Programme Plans (COPP) as well as the Project Documents included explanation of empowerment, but as in Sierra Leone's project documents, the description was basically copied from one document to another. The idea of this study was not to analyse how well or systematically the documents are written, but it has to be pointed out that Country Strategies, COPP-documents and Project Documents did not have clear connection with Annual and Quarterly Monitoring Reports.

Based on the results of this study, it was described in the project documents how the projects are aiming to reduce inequalities between women and men. The reduction of women's discrimination was seen as a result of the projects that enable women to have enough power within on the community and on the household level in order to improve their quality of life, their rights and wellbeing. Siitonen (1999: 61) describes empowerment as a feeling of internal power and Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 13) includes psychological strength. Even though the project documents did not include mention concerning women's internal power, the expected results showed that the capability for advocating their rights should be encouraged and realised.

According to Räsänen (2006: 78) empowerment means an ability to influence life, also Adams (2008: 17) and Lee (2001:52) present that empowered people are able to set goals. The results of this study showed that the project documents mentioned control over one's destiny, and it was seen as a result of the project process. People should be

able to feel control in relation to the reality and their own destiny (Räsänen 2006: 78). The project documents gave information concerning the control over destiny, but it was not described in more detail what sort of control that was.

In comparison to the emerged themes, the empowerment approaches of the literature review mentioned increased self-worth while the project documents described it as sense of dignity, self-actualization, sense of self-confidence, capacity for self-assessment and change in women's perception of self. With better self-worth, women can improve their quality of life. Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 13) emphasize self-confidence and ability to manage fears. Kiriti, Tisdell and Roy (2006: 202-203) include understanding and respect of self-worth. The results of this study accentuated the change in behaviour and attitude, especially within the probability of HIV infection risks. Based on the results, women should have more self-confidence and courage to take control of their sexuality. Also Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 13) highlight women's courage to say "no".

The results of this study showed that the project documents described the importance of training and increasing knowledge and emphasized it. The community members were trained in different topics in order to improve their knowledge and skills. Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 13, 19-20) describe empowerment as a better understanding of society challenges, as gaining intellectual and practical skills and knowledge, knowing how to read and write, and as an ability to manage human resources and conflicts. Based on the results, the training given concerned technical skills (farming) but also informative knowledge, such as human rights and domestic violence.

According to Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 13), empowerment refers to the ability to utilize the gained knowledge and that will lead to personal meaning. The results of this final project showed that the gained knowledge described in the project documents is mostly related to farming and to increasing of the production and sustainability and thereby to food security and better income. The community members should be able to use what they have learnt from the training in their farming. Lee (2001: 51) points out the coping abilities of empowered people. Conflict resolution and preparedness were one of the major issues in the project documents. It was not said whether community members really have coping abilities or how they could train those abilities, but in general, it was mentioned and it was also considered as an important issue.

Based on the results, the provision of resources was emphasized in the project documentation. Everyday life equipments and especially equipments to help girls' schooling was provided. Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 13) explain that in order to be empowered, women (girls) should have access to services such as loans, information and training, health centres and markets.

As to increasing options, in order to empower, women should have opportunities and options to gain more power. Chauduri (2001: 2) emphasizes access to education and Ravinder and Narayana (2006: 2) access to employment. The results showed that the access to credits/loans and the access to education as well as the availability of services such as health care and social services were described in the project documents.

Based on the results, the project documents showed the ability of the community members to make decision, to take part in initiatives, and to encourage members to participate on all levels within the community. According to Kabeer (2001: 19) empowerment means the ability to make strategic life choices. Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 13) add that the choices should be relevant to equality in the society. Results of this study showed that the project documents described women's opportunity to act and their position as leaders. Women should be included and have equal rights in the society. Participation in decision making was described on the household level as well as on the community level.

According to Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 21), taking responsibility means to control or take part in the community. Siitonen (1999: 61) includes the responsibility for the welfare of all community members. Results of this final project showed that according to the project documents, the projects are aiming to emphasize women's responsibility and their involvement in community development processes and in environment protection.

The results of this study showed that the ability to form and work in groups especially among women emerged from the project documents. The groups were aiming to exchange knowledge and give support to the other team members. According to Charlier and Caubergs (2007: 21) empowerment refers to the ability to form and/or

manage groups or services. On the community level, belonging into a group means taking actions as communities, and on the individual level, it is the ability to use values to look for the future. In the project documents, the meaning of the groups was described as a possibility to exchange knowledge and to act as cooperatives.

As Benini (2008: 66) has stated, the aspect of human rights is often forgotten from the definition of empowerment. This final project, as well as Benini (2008: 66), both show that human/women's rights issue is central in the discussion about the signs of empowerment. Rights are linked to the protection and advocacy of women on the community level as on the household level.

To conclude: The project documents showed signs of women's empowerment and as it has been pointed out, the signs were found in many different perspectives. Finding the signs for women's empowerment and how they were described, however, required a systematic analysis of project documents. Without comprehensive knowledge on what empowerment is, the findings would have been very limited. The project documentation needs to be reformed, so that the information contained in project documents can be interpreted otherwise than through systematic analysis. The results of this study give background information for Finn Church Aid in order to have dialogue with their partners and information on how to improve documentation concerning gender equity and women's empowerment. The signs of women's empowerment described in the project documents disclosed the diversity of the meaning of empowerment.

6.1 Ethical Considerations and Reliability

The study was based on the project documents written by several different persons; it has been taken into consideration that the result might differ from the reality. There could have been a chance of misunderstanding of the content of the documentation by the reader, or the project documents might not give a realistic picture of women's empowerment. This means that people who use the results of the final project have to be aware of the study method and the data used, as the results can be confusing and differ from the studies made concerning women's empowerment.

The study is done from a social point of view. Empowerment as such can be studied from other points of views also. The lack of knowledge concerning other aspects of

empowerment might affect the results, and this has been considered when analyzing the results.

According to Academy of Finland (2003), the researcher should act in accordance with the recognized practices of the research community, that is, sincerity, general caution and accuracy while processing the study and while recording, presenting and evaluating the results. The study should be planned, realized and reported in detail.

Figures presented in chapter 5 included extensive descriptions of the signs of women's empowerment gathered from the project documents. These figures might be more readable with less information, but the reason why information was not reduced is that the main purpose of these figures was to produce information for FCA. With broad figures, FCA has background information to dialogue with their partners.

According to Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 231) one way to measure the reliability of a study is the repeatability. Repeatability of this particular study is possible, but the results might be different depending on what kind of background information is used. If the theory identifies different indicators for women's empowerment, then the results might change. The reliability and validity should be assessed, although in a qualitative research that is particularly difficult. Hirsjärvi et al. (2009: 232) point out the exact comprehensive description of the study as well as the context in which the study relates. In qualitative study, a detailed description of all phases of the realization of the study increases the reliability. In a qualitative data analysis, data classification is crucial. The study must show the origin and criteria of the classification and categories. Grounds for the presentation of the results and conclusions should be clearly displayed, the results can be enriched, for example, with direct quotes from the data. (Hirsjärvi et al. 2009: 232.)

6.2 Further questions

While composing the study, several further questions have been raised. Especially the question concerning women's (human) rights emerged from the data, and as it was not included in the approaches of empowerment, that should be studied in more detail. Also the relations between men and women and how they participate in the projects should be studied. The project documents did not include much information concerning the challenges of equality between men and women, but from the aspect of women's

empowerment, the point that women have a possibility to be empowered, should somehow be also studied.

This final project answered the question how women's empowerment was described in the project documents. It was assumed that project documents were written in accordance with the instructions and that they follow each other. In this study, it was not possible to examine how they follow each other, but rather the study focused on the project document content. It is also worth examining whether the project documents are in connection with each other or if they are written randomly.

7 DISCUSSION

The purpose of this final project was to examine women's empowerment. Can the signs of women's empowerment be found in FCA's project documents and how the empowerment of women was described therein? Literature review about women's empowerment gave a necessary starting point to comprehensive analysis. Holistic understanding of the context and women's empowerment helped to find answers from the project documents.

The fact that the theory concerning women's empowerment was studied in advance gave a comprehensive picture of what empowerment means, but it also gave a holistic frame for the analysis. Main categories and sub-categories emerged based on the empowerment approaches, and the data itself became attached to the theory. Without a comprehensive picture of women's empowerment, the analysis would have been difficult to implement. However, it has been taken into account that when the data is forced into the themes that emerged from the theory, something might have been excluded from the analysis. Also, making the conclusions of the results of this study was difficult when the facts that emerged from the project documents had to be forced to connect with the themes brought from the theory.

The literature review revealed many different aspects of empowerment. It would have been possible to devote the whole time scheduled for the final project to the mere examination of empowerment from different perspectives. However, this study has attempted to find indicators of empowerment from a social point of view. Although

empowerment itself has been criticized for its trendy and even over-usage, specific empowerment aspects were found in this study – from the social and especially from the development cooperation point of view. Empowerment in a welfare state is certainly different thing than in a developing country, and it brought challenges to this study. Many authors have written about empowerment in welfare states where the debate is more about the feeling of internal power. Authors, who have studied the empowerment in developing countries, raise a lot more concrete matters, such as rights and opportunities to use basic services and to empower through this.

At the analysis phase of the study, a very large number of issues emerged from the project documents that improve women's status. The challenge of the analysis was the question, what exactly is empowerment? The answer can never be unequivocal. Broad study questions as well as a holistic review of the project documents made it possible to find the answers. Understanding women's empowerment and the extent of its comprehensiveness also helped in finding answers. While doing the study, the reality that the study could not be implemented for women themselves was confusing. The fact that the study results are based on the project documents written by someone else and the experiences experienced by somebody else might give a false impression as to whether the empowerment actually occurred. However, the solution to this problem was found in the beginning of the final project process when the meaning of the study was discussed with the representative of FCA. It would have been impossible to study whether the women are empowered if they themselves cannot answer the question. In addition empowerment is such a long process that it should be examined for years before reliable results could be obtained.

The results of this study showed that the signs of women's empowerment can be seen in the project documents. This was not written directly in the project documents, but based on the analysis, it can be said that there are signs of women's empowerment, and actually it is also described from different perspectives. At the early stage of the analysis, it was relatively difficult to find the results from the project documents. Understanding how differently the empowerment can be described called the review of the project documents several times. Actually, women's empowerment was described diversely: as an individual, as a member of a community and as a whole community. However, in order to find the results, the study was based on the holistic understanding of what women's empowerment is.

Even though the results showed that the project documents described a comprehensive view of women's empowerment, it must be remembered that empowerment is also an extremely extensive expression. This might have lead to a situation where empowerment is overused, and can mean almost everything. In that case, also the results of this final project must be criticized. Are all the signs found from the project documents really empowerment, or is it just combination of different causes raised from the project documents, but which could be connected with the themes raised from the theoretical review.

Empowerment is one of the crucial terms in social services education. Development cooperation and employment opportunities in the field are discussed in the media on a daily basis. The context in which the empowerment was studied in this final project might still be unfamiliar, but based on this study and the results, the understanding of empowerment, the importance of empowerment work and working methods has expanded extensively. Interest and the opportunity to work in development cooperation projects in the future have been confirmed by this study. The obscurity of the concept of empowerment, which was presented at the beginning of the final project process, changed by time to a comprehensive and wide perspective tool to be used in the future working life. The results of this study comprehend the diversity of the concept and the meaning of empowerment, and the results and the literature review can certainly be reused, not only in development cooperation work, but in social field work in general.

The study was realized in cooperation with Finn Church Aid. During the whole process of the final project, discussions as well as the exchange of ideas has occurred. It was expected that FCA would benefit of the results and could develop their project documentation as a whole. The fact that the results showed that the project documents include signs of women's empowerment, although indirectly, surely provides a starting point for a discussion for FCA and its partners concerning documentation; How to improve documentation in a way that it shows the signs of women's empowerment more clearly. According to the feedback given by FCA, this study has shown the need to develop documentation. The gender and women's issues are not presented clearly in the project documents concerning the development cooperation projects and neither do they give enough information concerning women's empowerment. The report forms

need to be reformed so that the reports show the impact of empowerment in the projects.

The problem of the documentation at the moment is that it does not give enough information to the reader about what has been realized in the projects and why. Documents include several pages of budget and administration information, but they do not include comprehensive explanation about the realization of the projects. More often the project documents answers the question how many times, for example, the community meeting was held even though it would be extremely important to know what was discussed and what kind of information was exchanged in the meetings; how was women's knowledge improved.

One problem of the documentation might be the broadness of the concept of empowerment, how to give simple guidelines to report about empowerment and its effects. It would also be very important to rethink what is the aim of the documentation, what kind of information is meaningful and what the information is used for. As mentioned, empowerment can be described in several ways, and certainly, in every community, empowerment can occur in different manners. The difficulty then is how to reform the documentation so that all the empowerment projects could express the signs of empowerment in the documents.

Empowerment is more of a emotional issue, and it cannot be measured with numbers. The documentation system should enable the writer to express feelings or stories of the community members in order to show what has changed in the community or on the individual level. On some level, the documents should include basic information about the empowerment or examples of it in order to guide the writer to point out the most meaningful issues. Numeral information should not be forgotten, but it should not be the major factor in the documentation.

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